

ESA Environmental Justice Section Report - July, 2012

The overall goals of the Environmental Justice (EJ) Section are to 1) promote environmental justice, i.e. the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes and educational levels with respect to the development and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies, 2) encourage the development, application and use of ecological research to address environmental issues, particularly those that disproportionately impact underrepresented or low income groups, 3) stimulate education and outreach efforts that will provide better use and understanding of ecological concepts and research by non-scientists, 4) increase participation by individuals from underrepresented groups in the ESA and 5) take leadership in advancing EJ concerns within ESA, and in the work of ESA members with other organizations engaged in EJ issues.

To accomplish these goals, the section is presently focusing on:

- 1) Increasing the effectiveness of community collaboration and outreach by ecologists through a several year plan of building a resource guide for working with communities.
- 2) Integrating EJ concerns with ecological research through collaborating with other ESA sections in organizing a special session and future meeting sessions and writing a white paper.
- 3) Engaging beyond ESA in ecology and justice-related initiatives
- 4) Supporting outreach and partnership of scientists communicating with faith communities
- 5) Growing leadership of newer and younger members in the Section's activities
- 6) Designing annual meeting activities in partnership with local communities and other EJ-related projects

In this report we present: Progress and plans for accomplishing our Goals, Highlights of the 2011 Meeting, including Minutes from the 2011 Business meeting, and Events planned for the 2012 meeting.

Progress and Plans in Accomplishing our Goals

1) Building the Guide to Working with Communities

A subcommittee of the EJ Section is conducting research on best practices in community outreach methodology with specific focus on working with minority and underrepresented communities to identify, research and solve ecological and environmental issues. This is not a trivial task given the lack of historical contact between ecologists and communities in contrast to the "overdeveloped" methodologies associated with anthropology, psychology, sociology, etc. all while dealing with issues and implications of "Human Subjects" research.

At the Portland 2012 meeting, we are reviewing the working draft and continuing discussion towards our final product at Special Evening Session (#22): The Action Ecologist: Building the Ecologists' Guide to working with Communities, organized by Ana Elisa Pérez Quintero, Megan M. Gregory, Cynthia L. Wright, Sara M. Gabrielson, Beatriz Otero with speaker Kellen Marshall Gillespie. The guide features several detailed narratives, of how "active ecologists" navigated projects that engaged communities in the processes of: defining goals and research questions, collecting and interpreting data, and applying new knowledge to enhance community well-being and environmental sustainability. We'll discuss ongoing challenges, success stories and lessons learned from collaborations between ecologists and communities. Our goals are to 1) Present and discuss findings from last year's survey and group discussions; 2.) Define formats, concepts, and responsibilities for completing the guide, and 3.) Further develop the Action Ecologists Network through interactive audiovisual materials and maps of where these ecologists are working.

2) **EJ Scholarship & Ecology: Research Questions, Collaboration towards a white paper/ publication.**

To accomplish identifying key ecological research questions and theory associated with human and justice concerns, we have designed a special session for this coming meeting that will be featured on Monday morning. We are engaging other sections to participate with us in dialogue: Agro-Ecology, Applied Ecology, Human Ecology, Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Urban Ecosystems Ecology. Our goal is exploring tradeoffs between ecological benefits and human negative impacts, terminology and frameworks to arrive at a common language to advance both the discipline of ecology and benefit human societal concerns.

3) **Engaging in Ecology & Environmental Justice Initiatives beyond ESA**

Education and Human Resources Committee (EHRC) - Jablonski and Middendorf continued to serve on the ESA Education and Human Resources Committee, which, recognizing the critical need of the society to focus on issues of diversity, requested that the committee be, renamed the Committee for Diversity and Education (CDE). The Board will review the request at the 5 August 2012 meeting. Members of EHRC also published a letter in *Science*, Add Ecology to the Pre-Medical Curriculum (Beck, et al., *Science* 16 March 2012: 1301), stressing the need for ecological and environmental considerations in medical training.

The section also presented a poster titled "A model approach for effective EJ outreach within the Ecological Society of America" at the Environmental Justice Conference: One Community – Environment held in Detroit, Michigan, August 23-26, 2011. We utilized the feedback from the Austin ESA meeting in our presentation to the EJ community to encourage communication across the disciplines. Through building the *Guide to Working with Communities* the section has been gathering EJ-perspectives from diverse communities in order to enhance collaboration and better our work as ecologists and broaden our experiences, such as with farming communities. Section members also initiated work on a research project to look at how ecology is discussed in environmental justice articles.

4) **Outreach and Partnership of Scientists Communicating with Religious Organizations**

The EJ section continues to develop opportunities for catalyzing dialogue and outreach with faith communities following an outstanding set of related sessions in Austin in 2011. This outreach is a means to engage with a broad spectrum of the general adult public and reach local communities. ESA members and leaders have continued to build relationships, deepen collaboration with faith community partners, and pursue individual outreach opportunities, laying the groundwork for two workshops at ESA Portland (described below: **Saturday's WK-5**, a dialogue for common ground between faith communities and ecologists; **Tuesday's WK-38**, speakers bureau for outreach to faith communities training session). EJ section chair Leanne Jablonski and member Greg Hitzhusen collaborated with Jenny Holmes, Environmental Ministries Director of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns and Oregon Interfaith Power and Light, based in Portland, to prepare a Saturday workshop for ESA Portland, and have also been in dialogue with Mike Schut, Environmental and Economic Affairs Officer for the Episcopal Church, USA, based in Seattle. ESA's Earth Stewardship workshop in Chevy Chase, MD in June, 2012, also included discussion of the speaker's bureau, and ESA current president Steward Pickett and past president Terry Chapin met with Cassandra Carmichael, Director of the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Programs, to discuss a role for the NCC and other National Religious Partnership for the Environment partners moving forward. Also attending the meeting were Nadine Lymn (ESA Director of Public Affairs), Greg Hitzhusen, and Dr. Jay Gullledge, on behalf of the American Geophysical Union. This meeting solidified faith community engagements and opened the door to broadening the speakers bureau to societies beyond ESA.

Speakers Bureau for Earth Stewardship Outreach to Faith Communities. The collaborations and meetings described above generated some outstanding commitments aimed at implementing a speakers bureau in the coming year. Cassandra Carmichael, of the NCC's Eco-Justice Programs committed to help develop a webinar training module for speakers bureau participants; the webinar will be collaboratively produced by mainline Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and evangelical faith community leaders representing more than 90% of American faith communities. A pilot version of this webinar will be presented at the Tuesday evening WK-38 in Portland, and following revisions, will become available online to provide training into the future; speakers from other professional societies will also be invited to participate in the speakers bureau. This broader involvement of scientists is welcomed by the faith community partners, who will promote the speakers bureau to their communities. The webinar will highlight successful models for Earth stewardship outreach in faith communities, and orient speakers to key demographics and best practices across US faith communities. Further modules may be developed in the future to describe an ever more diverse array of particular faith communities in the US and beyond. Participants in WK-38 will have the opportunity to engage in faith community outreach in 2012-2013 as part of an initial training cohort, including outreach evaluations and periodic conference call support during the year, leading to an ESA 2013 workshop in Minneapolis to share and evaluate the successes and challenges of the speakers bureau in its first year. We will also hold a pre-meeting workshop/field trip: WK 5 - Collaboration for Ecosystem Preservation: Ecologists and Faith Communities Discovering Common Ground for Sustaining Life On Earth. The workshop will engage ESA members with Portland area faith community sustainability initiatives.

5) Growing the Leadership & Engagement in the EJ Section

The section has grown to number over 80 members (many of recent additions being seasoned ESA members), and over 100 different persons signed-in to EJ-sponsored events and meetings at the 2011 annual meeting. We have worked to collaborate with and affirm EJ-related ESA meeting events and the initiatives of other ESA members.

We have greatly benefitted from having newer/student members included in our leadership and their energy and ideas. Several of our older members are participating as Mentors in the 2012 meeting. We are also building relationships with the Student Section Leadership, and our Liaison (currently Tiffany Carey tifcarey@umich.edu) who is committed to being involved in decision-making with us and information exchange with other students. Kellen Marshall-Gillespie and Ana Elisa Perez Quintero are outstanding SEEDS student leaders and have been key in engaging younger members by mentoring SEEDS students and introducing students at the annual meetings to the section.

Kellen Marshall-Gillespie was included as a member of the ESA Next Generation committee where she along with five other graduate students and early career professionals developed ideas for increasing the utility of ESA for those populations. Together we have encouraged students coming from diverse backgrounds to think about how they can better engage in communities and collaborate on issues involving environmental inequalities. These discussions generated new ESA sessions including: *WK 41 - The Latin American Side of Ecology*, where a group of students will speak about issues surrounding Latin American representation in ESA.

EJ Section officers have begun discussions aimed at identifying individuals for future leadership positions in the section. Younger members have highlighted that during the past two years the EJ Section has been leading by example through giving a voice and great leadership opportunities to young ecologists and members who are from diverse backgrounds and concerned about justice issues within ESA.

6) Annual Meeting Activities

a) 2011 Annual Meeting in Austin

The section was very active at the 2011 Meeting in Austin, organizing 5 sessions (Organized Oral, Field Trip and three workshops) and a business meeting. We collaborated with other Sections and ESA staff on a Special Session, Organized Oral, Field Trip, & a joint mixer. The details are shown in our Council report from last year: <http://www.esajournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1890/2011.councilreport> and our August 11th, 2011 business meeting minutes (below)

Environmental Justice Section Meeting Minutes

Austin, TX, August 10, 2011. Participants: ~25 attended this meeting while total involvement in EJ-related events (as determined by event sign-ins) was ~100.

1) Introductions and concerns: We first introduced ourselves and shared reasons for attending the section meeting which included:

- Ecology and EJ: Ecology serving EJ issues, ecological knowledge needed to impact EJ, Synthesis center / Margaret Palmer; synthesizing socio-ecological data (NCEAS)
- ESA-EJ & Other Movements/Fields: Make connections with: EJ 2014/EPA – Pennsylvania; Science in public policy; social psychology; Socioeconomics/Diversity; bring populations in; Publish in lands and landscapes
- Personal choices/concerns as an ecologist: Desire career to address social justice issues, How can I help? Learning as an ecologist not separate; Flourish with heart; Communicating to groups
- Particular Topic Areas of Interest: Faith-based issues: and land use; getting info to that community; Link of Eastern meditation & EJ; Food: food issues, food sovereignty – developing inner cities; Appalachia & Mountaintop removal; Human element in tropical science research; People and place connections; restoring degraded environments

2) Copies of 2011 Environmental Justice Section Report to the Governing Board distributed and discussion of EJ-related initiatives at the meeting, including:

- Joint Mixer of ESA Sections Applied Ecology, Environmental Justice, Human Ecology and Urban Ecosystem Ecology.
- SPECIAL SESSION 2 - Ecology and Human Rights: Defining the Relationship, Identifying the Opportunities.
- ORGANIZED ORAL 14 - Engaging with communities and regional decision makers to sustain Earth's life-support systems.
- ORGANIZED ORAL 30 - We are all Connected: From Environmental Justice Education and Local Community Involvement to Earth Stewardship.
- FIELD TRIP 14 - Urban Bioblitz
- FIELD TRIP 22 - Toxic Tour of East Austin with PODER (People Organized in the Defense of Earth and her Resources).
- WORKSHOP 27 - Ecologists and Religious Organizations - Partnering for Earth Stewardship
- WORKSHOP 34 - Ecologists' Speaker's Bureau for National Earth Stewardship Community Outreach to Faith Communities.
- WORKSHOP 36 - The active ecologist: Developing a guide for how ecologists and communities can best collaborate for a healthier environment.

3) Planning for upcoming year, 2011 – 2012. We talked about ideas for the 2012 Meeting in Portland, Oregon. Ideas having passion for the members included:

- Draft of Guidelines for Working with Communities
- Working with Faith communities
 - Build relationships; pursue 'certification' (Good Eco-housekeeping Seal); respectful dialogue

- Participants encouraged to all try to do something this year and report back (perhaps in an organized oral or workshop session)
- Link EJ Section plan from 2012 – 2015 (e.g. linking with EPA 2014 plan);
 - What should EJ research look like? (sociology, ecology, cultivate eco-ambassadors)
- Others: Celebrate Diversity, Mountaintop Removal, Bio-Blitz
- Food related activities (Perhaps a Symposia/Organized Oral & Field trips)
- Ideas related to food/FOOD SYSTEMS
- Key Portland resources to contact for our various EJ efforts

4) Long-range Planning:

Looking towards ESA 2015 Meeting theme – Biosphere Integrity, we discussed how we could best have impact, and discussed developing a 3-year plan to lead up to the meeting, building upon the work underway with our: *Guide for Working with Communities* as follows:

- 2012 – Hold a Training sessions at meeting: Develop facilitators in the skills of how to build ownership of the environment, provide training for and the EJ section, community training
- 2013 – Experience of going and doing presentations from this training, and then revise the guide based on these experiences
- 2014 (at meeting or throughout the year) - connect with other associations (e.g. psychologists, American public health, environmental health)

b) 2012 Annual Meeting in Portland

The section was active in organizing eight sessions (2 Special Sessions, 3 Workshops and 2 Field Trips and a business meeting. We collaborated with other sections in many sessions, including developing a Symposium with Agro-Ecology, supporting student events and a joint mixer.

EJ Section Activities Planned for 2012 in Portland include:

1) 2012 Environmental Justice Section BUSINESS MEETING

2) **Joint Mixer of ESA Sections** Applied Ecology, Environmental Justice, Human Ecology and Urban Ecosystem Ecology. Here the Bioblitz and other key activities of the sections will be featured.

3) **SS 11 - Ecological Research Questions and Theory Associated with Human and Justice Concerns.** Organizers: Charlie Nilon (U Missouri-Columbia), Leanne Jablonski (MEEC, Univ of Dayton), Kellen Marshall-Gillespie (U Illinois-Chicago) & George Middendorf (Howard U). We are engaging other sections in dialogue with us: Agro-Ecology, Applied Ecology, Human Ecology, Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Urban Ecosystems Ecology. Our goal is exploring tradeoffs between ecological benefits and human negative impacts, terminology and frameworks to arrive at a common language to advance both the discipline of ecology and benefit human societal concerns. Our outcome is future ESA events and a white paper.

4) **SS 22 - The Action Ecologist: Building the Ecologists' Guide to Working with Communities** Organizers: Ana Elisa Pérez-Quintero, Megan M. Gregory, Cynthia L. Wright and Sara M. Gabrielson. Moderator: Beatriz Otero Speaker: Kellen A. Marshall-Gillespie. This Special Session will review the draft guide – a collaborative project coordinated by the EJ Section: Our goals are to 1) Present and discuss findings from last year's survey and group discussions; 2.) Define formats, concepts, and responsibilities for completing the guide, and 3.) Further develop the Action Ecologists Network through interactive audiovisual materials and maps of where these ecologists are working.

5) **FT 8 - Hungry for More Field Trip: An Ecological Lens for Understanding Diversity, Urban Agriculture and Local Sustainability.** Organizers: Megan M. Gregory and Ana Elisa Pérez-Quintero Trip Leader: Kellen A. Marshall-Gillespie. Participants will explore the dynamics of food security through visiting community food gardens in Portland OR. They will speak with neighborhood

residents and collect both sociological and ecological information regarding threats to urban agro-sustainability. Our goals are to: see how understanding sites conditions can improve yield for the purposes of the garden's mission (education, job training, or food production) to put on the market; develop an ESA endorsed agricultural sustainability metric for urban community farming, and use the information to highlight evolving areas of research interest for urban ecology and agro-ecology. Our hope is a multi-year study guided both by relevance to the theme of each annual conference coupled with community needs and concerns as expressed by community gardeners.

6) WK 5 - Collaboration for Ecosystem Preservation: Ecologists and Faith Communities Discovering Common Ground for Sustaining Life On Earth. Organizers: Leanne Jablonski, Greg Hitzhusen and Jenny Holmes. The workshop will engage ESA members with Portland area faith community sustainability initiatives.

7) WK 37 - Developing Together: Ecology Curriculum for Community and School Urban Gardens. Organizers: Ana Elisa Pérez-Quintero, Kellen A. Marshall-Gillespie and Leanne M. Jablonski. What should the roles be of ecologists, other scientists and ecology students within community efforts? Getting involved in local agriculture and food sovereignty efforts is a means to address this question. Local organizations working in agriculture will be invited to develop ecology curriculum that integrates the educational needs of cultural and economic communities (e.g school, church or vacant lot gardens) run by community or non-profit organizations.

8) WK 38 – Empowering Ecology Outreach to Faith Communities: From Best Practices to a Speakers' Bureau. Organizers: **Leanne M. Jablonski and Gregory E. Hitzhusen. (Described: above).**

9) There are also a number of other presentations with EJ-related content slated for the 2012 meeting, including diversity and traditional ecological knowledge concerns: SYMP 14 -The New Grand Challenge for Ecology: Sustaining Agriculture While Promoting Environmental Justice (endorsed by EJ Section); SYM 6 - Human Behavior and Sustainability – Addressing Barriers to Change (endorsed by EJ Section); SYMP 8 - Revolutionary Ecology: The Role of Diversity In Unleashing Ecology's Potential to Improve Environmental Conditions and Societal Welfare; PL 3 - ESA Recent Advances Lecture: "Since Time Immemorial": Recognizing Indigenous Environmental Knowledge in Land and Resource Management; OOS 8 – Living at Water's Edge: Shifting Human Patterns Impacting Coastal Ecosystems; OOS 11 - Complex Interactions Between Biota, Landscapes and Native Peoples; SS 15 - Civic Ecology: A Pathway for Earth Stewardship In Cities; SS 16 - Connecting Collaborative Conservation Across Cultures: Identifying Effective Strategies for Cross-Cultural Comparisons of Collaborative Conservation Research; WK 36 - Water In the West: Diving Into the Availability, Distribution, and Policies of the West's Most Precious Resource; WK41 – The Latin American Side of Ecology; FT 6 - Urban Bioblitz: Ecologists Contributing to and Learning from a Portland Historic Community Restoration Effort; ESA Diversity Celebration; ESA Diversity Luncheon: Generation Z: Past, Present, and Future for ESA's Diversity and Education.

Respectfully Submitted,

Leanne M Jablonski (Chair);

For the EJ Executive Committee: Ana Elisa Perez Quintero (Vice-Chair); Kellen Marshall-Gillespie (Secretary), George Middendorf (Past Chair).